

V. Findings and Recommendations

Each of the LRPC subcommittees—Demand, Supply, and Best Practices—gathered information within the scope of their assignments. Based on the information gathered, each subcommittee made findings regarding the current and expected outlook at Hillcrest; and based on these findings, each subcommittee contributed to the LRPC’s overall recommendations (which are restated below. Findings and recommendations of the individual subcommittees were also supported by the LRPC.

Whereas, the demand for student spaces at Hillcrest school exceeds the supply—given the size of Hillcrest’s physical plant and the effects of changing neighborhood demographics and enrollment patterns—and in support of the principles stated above, we, the Long Range Planning Committee of Hillcrest School, recommend the following:

Recommendation 1: To ensure **quality public education** in a non-crowded environment, we recommend the OUSD institute an enrollment plan at Hillcrest that eventually allows the total campus population to a) stabilize at a number that fits the size of the available physical plant and b) meets each grade level’s needs with regard to class size. (As discussed later, utilization of the current physical plant in a manner that is the same or similar to its current use suggests a maximum total population of approximately 310 students, plus or minus five percent).

Recommendation 2: To ensure a **transparent enrollment process** that provides certainty to families, we recommend that the Hillcrest attendance-area boundaries be adjusted to more accurately match the expected number of applicants with the number of spaces available. (The committee recognizes that this will necessitate the simultaneous adjustment of the attendance-area boundaries of other nearby schools.)

Recommendation 3: In addition to Recommendation Number 2, boundary adjustment, we recommend that the OUSD examine the feasibility of constructing or converting an existing site in the “Hills” community to accommodate the burgeoning number of students seeking enrollment in schools such as Chabot, Montclair, Thornhill, Redwood Heights, and Joaquin Miller.

Recommendation 4: We recommend that the OUSD conduct a feasibility study of the potential for implementing a multi-track year-round schedule to determine if doing so could increase capacity enough to accommodate demand, and also to determine the other effects (both positive and negative) of a year-round schedule.

Recommendation 5: To address the current gap in OUSD written policies regarding the placement of children who are involuntarily redirected from their attendance-area school, we recommend that any family whose child is involuntarily redirected from their attendance-area school be given the highest priority to attend the alternate schools they identify on their Options application form, consistent with the current proposed policy for

the Alameda Unified School District. *[For more information on AUSD's proposed policy, see Appendix A].*¹

Recommendation 6: Consistent with OUSD Board Policy 0420.5² (regarding vesting schools with decision-making power over matters that affect students and student learning), we recommend that admission to grades other than kindergarten occur only if the Hillcrest principal determines that admitting additional students will not create overcrowding in a grade band, taking into account the planned-for attrition required to prevent overcrowding.

Recommendation 7: To offset the extremely large kindergarten classes admitted in the past three years, the size of upcoming kindergarten classes will need to be curtailed—perhaps substantially—relative to the steady-state school population, consistent with the models run by the Supply Subcommittee. *[For more information, see Appendix D.]*

Recommendation 8: The process for determining which, if any, children are involuntarily redirected to another school should be transparent, traceable, and open, and should be fully described in writing and published on the OUSD website's enrollment page before the beginning of the open enrollment period.

Furthermore, **to the end of enabling a sustainable, long-term, and constructive relationship** with the OUSD, we offer that the Hillcrest LRPC continue to work with OUSD staff and supply them with information that may be helpful in establishing policies for Hillcrest and its neighboring schools.

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- 1 This recommendation should not be interpreted as an endorsement by the committee of using redirection as a standalone solution to overcrowding. The committee does not view redirection alone as being a principled solution to the problem of long-term overenrollment.
 - 2 OUSD BP 0420.5, Philosophy, Goals, Objectives and Comprehensive Plans: School-Based Decision Making. "The Governing Board desires to improve student learning by giving decision-making opportunities to the people who are closest to the students." webportal.ousd.k12.ca.us/WebItem.aspx?WebItemID=23&TabID=30

V-A. Results of the Demand Issues Subcommittee

This section summarizes the work and conclusions of the Demand Subcommittee, including a more detailed explanation of the subcommittee's scope; its methodology; the results of its data-gathering process; and recommendations based on those results. The following points summarize the conclusions that the subcommittee drew from its efforts. While we recognize that data-gathering procedures and the forecasting of future enrollment trends naturally encompass some variability, we believe these conclusions are strongly supported by the data gathered.

- Current Hillcrest families expect and/or desire their children to remain at Hillcrest through the upper grades at rates that are higher than those observed in the past. In other words, historic attrition estimates used to project class sizes in upper grades cannot be assumed to reflect current or future attrition rates.
- The significantly increased demand for kindergarten enrollment over the past three years is likely to continue or even increase for at least the next two years. Thereafter, we have limited data to indicate what may happen one way or another. Problematic excess demand at Hillcrest is an immediate issue that urgently needs OUSD attention, and it will be an ongoing issue unless it is redressed by the OUSD.

Based on these findings, we conclude that in coming years, the high demand for K spaces at Hillcrest will continue or may even increase relative to that seen over the past three years. These conclusions are consistent with the results of the OUSD demographer's analysis, although the LRPC's data—which was collected from actual families in the attendance area, rather than extrapolated from Alameda County birth rate charts—forecasts the overenrollment of the school reaching crisis proportions far earlier than does the district's modeled data. Thus, *any* delay in addressing this problem is a significant concern.

1. *Scope of Assignment*

The Demand Subcommittee was charged with forecasting future enrollment at Hillcrest Elementary given current trends and admission policies. Specifically, the subcommittee was charged with examining:

- Future attrition/retention rates. If families expect their children to leave the school before eighth grade, at what grade do they expect that departure to occur?
- Future enrollment rates. How many children currently living in the Hillcrest attendance area expect to attend kindergarten at Hillcrest in the next several years?

2. *Methodology*

To carry out its charge, this subcommittee (with the review and endorsement of the full LRPC) conducted two surveys. First, it surveyed existing Hillcrest families to gauge their plans for children currently attending the school. The goal was to gather empirical data on expected retention rates. Families were asked to state the highest grade level that they expected each of their children to complete at Hillcrest, and to provide a confidence level for that answer (high,

medium, or low). The survey also provided space for narrative comments. Data was collected over a six-week period.

Next, the subcommittee conducted a census of households in the current Hillcrest attendance area to gauge potential future enrollment for the coming five years, beginning with academic year 2008-2009. The methodology involved compiling a spreadsheet of every address in the attendance area, and then asking volunteers from the community to provide information on whether there were pre-K children living in a given household; whether the family intended to apply to Hillcrest for kindergarten; and whether Hillcrest would be that family's first choice of school for their child(ren). Responses were also solicited from members of the greater community, including existing Hillcrest families, via direct emails.

3. *Data and Analysis—Modeling Hillcrest enrollment demand*

For any given grade in any given year, total enrollment can be deduced through the following simple equation:

$$[\text{Enrollment}] = [\# \text{ of students last year}] + [\# \text{ of new enrollees}] - [\text{students who leave}]$$

For kindergarten, there are no continuing students or exiting students, so the only relevant component of this equation is new enrollees. In general, Hillcrest has not admitted students to grades beyond kindergarten. Thus, the “new enrollees” in this equation is set to zero for all grades beyond kindergarten. (However, exceptions are made, including for the 2007-2008 school year. A more complete assessment of demand would also attempt to estimate the current and future demand for enrollment in post-K classes. Due to the limited time and resources available for the committee's work, such an assessment was not conducted. Future surveys forecasting demand for post-K enrollment within the Hillcrest neighborhood would be a valuable expansion of this body of work.)

Thus, to forecast enrollment in each grade and overall enrollment in the school, we fielded two surveys intended to (1) gauge the proportion of current students enrolled in Hillcrest who plan on continuing to attend Hillcrest in future years, and (2) measure future kindergarten enrollment over the next five years.

Before discussing the details of these surveys, it is worthwhile to consider the historical patterns in both the grade-to-grade retention rates as well as kindergarten enrollment over the past few years.

a. *Historic grade-to-grade attrition*

Figure D-1 presents the proportion of kindergarten enrollees who remain at Hillcrest in each grade from K through 8, averaged over all years for which data are available. The figure demonstrates how Hillcrest works. Traditionally, the school has had two kindergarten classes, two classes each for first, second, and third grade, one class each for fourth and fifth grade, and two classes devoted to the middle school (i.e., two combination classes each with sixth, seventh, and eighth graders). Essentially, the school acts as a funnel with children leaving but not being

replaced, so that an initial K group of 40 children eventually becomes approximately 20 children in grade 6, and then these 20 continue through to graduate at grade 8. This enrollment model depends on the historical attrition observed in Figure D-1 (fairly steady between K through 5 with a discretely larger drop between grades 5 and 6). It also depends on not adding new students in grades beyond kindergarten when members of the original kindergarten class leave the school.

Figure D-2 presents a more detailed view of attrition, showing how the summary trends presented in Figure D-1 are composed of slightly varying levels of attrition over the years. The historical data upon which these and some of the subsequent figures are based are presented in Table 1.

Figures D-3 and D-4 show alternative presentations of the same data, aligning the attrition rates with the calendar years in which they occur. From this view of the data, there is an apparent trend in recent years towards more students choosing to stay than has been the case in the past.

b. Historic patterns in kindergarten enrollment

Since new enrollment occurs primarily in kindergarten, trends in kindergarten enrollment are indicative of future trends in overall enrollment in the school. Figure D-5 shows the incoming kindergarten class from school year 1993-1994 to 2007-2008. Before the last three years, kindergarten enrollment has hovered around 40 students per years. In the last three years, kindergarten enrollment has been substantially higher, with enrollment of 48 students in 2005-2006, 50 students in 2006-2007, and 52 students in 2007-2008.

In sum, inspection of the historical data up until the current time reveals two recent trends that have in large part fueled concerns about future enrollment at Hillcrest. First, there is an emerging trend that students are less likely to leave at the end of each grade than has been the case in the past. Second, to the extent that the past three years are a bell-weather for future enrollment, the demand for kindergarten spaces had increased relative to the incoming kindergarten classes of previous years.

The increased enrollment demand is not surprising given the combined factors of new facilities for the middle school, near completion of post-fire home rebuilding, a general renewed interest in Oakland's public schools, and the much-publicized, consistently high standardized test scores of Hillcrest students.

The remainder of this section presents the work that this subcommittee did to attempt to assess the extent to which these emerging trends are likely to continue in the near future.

c. Surveying existing Hillcrest families

At the end of the 2006-2007 school year, the Demand Subcommittee designed and fielded an internet-based survey of existing Hillcrest families. The purpose of the survey was to gauge the proportion of Hillcrest students who will continue to enroll at the school in future years. By comparing the predicted future enrollment rate of current Hillcrest families against the historic

re-enrollment rates displayed in Figure D-1, we were able to assess whether the grade-to-grade attrition rates have indeed declined (suggesting the loss of fewer students in future years).

The survey queried families with regards to the grade through which they intended their currently enrolled child to stay at Hillcrest. The survey also included a question that allowed parents to express their thoughts regarding the factors that are likely to influence this decision. The response rate was very high (there were responses for roughly 83 percent of the students enrolled in the 2006-2007 academic year).

Figure D-6 presents survey results indicating the proportion of students in each grade for which parents indicated they would continue through eighth grade. As is evident, the projected re-enrollment rates exceed the re-enrollment rates from years past.

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Table D-1. Results of Existing Family Survey

Grade	No. of survey respondents	No. who intend to remain through 8th grade	Total percentage retention present—8th grade	Scenario 1: assume each current grade will experience the same attrition each year through 8th grade	Scenario 2: assume each current grade will experience the same attrition each year through 8th grade with the exception of 5th grade, where attrition will be three times the usual	
				Annual attrition	Annual attrition for all grades but 5th	Attrition for 5th grade
K	41	34	83%	2.3%	1.8%	5.4%
1	42	38	90%	1.4%	1.1%	3.3%
2	35	31	89%	2.0%	1.5%	4.5%
3	29	26	90%	2.2%	1.6%	4.8%
4	36	35	97%	0.7%	0.5%	1.5%
5	32	25	78%	7.9%	4.7%	14.1%
6	27	23	85%	7.7%	7.7%	NA
7	16	16	100%	0.0%	0	NA
Average				3.0%	2.4%	5.6%

The above table shows that even the modest attrition rates observed last year may severely understate what existing parents indicate is their intent regarding their child continuing at the school through eighth grade. For example, the current fourth grade class has 36 students and 97 percent of those students are expected to stay through eighth grade. This means that the sixth grade class for this group will be no less than 34 students and probably 35 students.

The OUSD's expectations for retention at Hillcrest (as discussed at a meeting on August 7, 2007), predict that the current fifth and fourth grades will shrink through attrition to 21 between the fifth and sixth grade years. ***This represents an estimated 38% attrition rate which is not borne out by recent attrition rates and is entirely inconsistent with the data obtained in the Demand Subcommittee survey.*** The addition of 9 children to the school for fall 2007 in grades higher than K further exacerbated the problem of overcrowding, because needed attrition that had occurred was undone by the addition of new students..

In terms of demand for space in the coming years based on the existing lower grades, the 2007-2008 kindergarten class is 52 students with 87% indicating they will stay through eighth grade. Because there were 50 students admitted for each of the two prior years, the current first grade class has 48 students, 92% of whom expect to stay through eighth grade. Similarly, the current second grade class is 48 students, with 92% planning to stay through eighth grade. Assuming the accuracy of these retention rates and the addition of 40 kindergarten students each year beginning in 2008, the total school population would be 364 in 2010 and 374 in 2013, which is significantly greater than the school capacity of 310 students. These data indicate that

the school simply cannot sustain continued classes of more than 40 (or even at 40) for even one more year.

As with any survey, especially one seeking information about future actions, there is some uncertainty; parents currently at the school cannot fully anticipate what changes might occur at the school or in their own lives (*e.g.*, work changes, transfers).

d. Census of the Hillcrest attendance area

Forecasting future kindergarten enrollment is a complex task. To precisely estimate the number of future kindergarteners, one would need to know the number of preschool-aged children in the attendance area; the proportion of these children who will remain in the attendance area as they reach enrollment age; the proportion of these children who will attend Hillcrest rather than another public or private elementary school; the rate at which families with pre-K children are moving into the attendance area; and the number of empty post-fire lots still available for new (family) homes to potentially be added to the attendance area.

Clearly, data on these factors is not available for future years and estimating these variables is frankly impossible. However, with a good point-in-time estimate of the number of pre-K children residing in the attendance area, one could predict the number of kindergarteners planning to enroll in Hillcrest by looking at the number of children in the neighborhood that were four to five years old, three to four years old, and so on.

The subcommittee began by extracting data from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing (which measured the number of kids in the attendance area as of April 1999) and assessing whether these data provided a good approximation of the number of children enrolling in kindergarten from 2000 through 2005. We found a rough correspondence between these census figures and future enrollment.

Based on this finding, we then designed a survey to be administered to all households in the attendance area. We considered administering the survey to a random sample of the 1,600 plus households in the current attendance area, but determined before the fact that the reliability of our enrollment estimates from such a random sample (that is to say, the tightness of the margin of error) would be of an insufficient level of precision to draw firm conclusions. We therefore decided to try to interview as many households as possible in the attendance area with the aim of at least establishing lower-bound estimates of future Hillcrest kindergarten enrollment.

Just for this 42% of homes in the attendance area, we estimate that there will be a ***minimum of 47 to 54*** applicants to the kindergarten class entering in 2008 and a minimum of 39 to 43 in 2009. The data and process used to arrive at these estimates are presented in detail in Appendix B, along with estimates for the following years.

Those lower bounds are based only on the 42% of homes that have been successfully surveyed, it is expected that there are some as-yet-unknown pre-K applicants among the 58% of

homes not surveyed, though the proportion is very likely to be much less given the manner in which the survey targeted homes in which it was known that young children were residing.

Despite the fact that we clearly did not cover all households, the survey results suggest that the number of applicants to Hillcrest for kindergarten 2008 will be significantly in excess of the historical average of roughly 40 students. Given that we fell far short of interviewing all households, we are confident that our survey indicates that the demand for kindergarten slots in the near future will significantly exceed the demand seen in the years prior to 2005.

e. Corroborating information from OUSD

During one of our committee meetings over the summer, we were able to meet with the OUSD's official demographer. The demographer presented estimates of her own kindergarten enrollment projections as well as a discussion of how she forecasts enrollment in higher grades. The demographer's analysis of enrollment in higher grades was quite similar to our own analysis, using historical grade-to-grade retention rates to forecast future enrollment. The district's demographer, however, had not performed a survey of existing Hillcrest parents. Her results differed significantly from ours in terms of the expected attrition rates which the OUSD analysis significantly underestimated because these were based on historical attrition rates. Historical attrition rates no longer hold.

Regarding kindergarten enrollment, the demographer indicated that the district estimated kindergarten enrollment according to the historical relationship between the number of households in the area, the number of births per capita in the area (not the Hillcrest attendance area but greater Oakland), and observed kindergarten enrollment. Despite the obvious difference between the district's model and our estimates based on the survey of attendance area households, the district's projections with regards to future kindergarten enrollment were largely consistent with our conclusions. The district projects kindergarten enrollment at or above 50 applicants per year for the next few years.

4. *Findings of the Demand Issues Subcommittee*

- **Finding D1:** Attrition rates have declined significantly in recent years. While predicting future attrition involves a degree of guesswork, the recent data indicate that future attrition rates will be less than 5%, and most likely only 2%.
- **Finding D2:** The OUSD should prepare for the likelihood that demand for kindergarten at Hillcrest may exceed (perhaps significantly) 60 children annually.
- **Finding D3:** Unless some dramatic and immediate changes are implemented (such as expansion of capacity, redistricting, year-round schedules or severe (<20 children) restrictions on the size of incoming K classes), the size of various grades from third through eighth will not be sustainable at Hillcrest. Case in point: applying an attrition rate consistent with the survey of existing families (10% attrition after fifth grade and 3% for all other years) and assuming an incoming K class of 40 students per year in the future, leads to a prediction of severe overcrowding with total school population continuing to grow to a peak of 337 students in 2011.

5. *Recommendations of the Demand Issues Subcommittee*

- **Recommendation D1:** The OUSD should include a realistic (*i.e.*, low) attrition rate in its models for projecting student population at Hillcrest.
- **Recommendation D2:** Admission to grades other than kindergarten should be permitted to occur only if the principal of the school determines that the addition would not create overcrowding in that or another grade (currently or in the future), taking into account the required attrition needed to prevent overcrowding in grades 4 through 8.
- **Recommendation D3:** The Hillcrest community should complete the enrollment intentions survey annually and the results should be evaluated and factored into OUSD admission decisions.
- **Recommendation D4:** The determination of the number of kindergarten students to be admitted in any particular year should take into account the available capacity at the school both at the time of admission and in the future.

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Table 1: Historical data on grade sizes at Hillcrest from 1993 through the present.

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	TOTAL
1993-94	41	37	35	32	35	24	31	NA	NA	235
1994-95	32	42	44	36	35	35	26	26	NA	276
1995-96	43	36	34	40	34	35	34	22	21	299
1996-97	40	43	35	36	34	33	29	14	21	285
1997-98	35	35	43	35	31	30	23	10	10	252
1998-99	37	35	33	39	35	27	24	17	9	256
1999-00	36	34	34	35	35	32	27	17	15	265
2000-01	37	39	34	32	34	31	22	23	17	269
2001-02	45	34	38	31	29	33	22	19	22	273
2002-03	45	42	32	31	31	28	24	21	19	273
2003-04	42	44	39	32	31	32	21	20	21	282
2004-05	38	39	41	37	31	29	28	19	17	279
2005-06	48	32	38	40	29	29	24	26	16	282
2006-07	50	48	31	36	37	29	18	23	27	299
2007-08	52	49	48	32	36	34	27	18	22	318

The data are available from the California Department of Education (CDE) Demographics Unit Web Site. (Add web address or do so in footnote) The summaries presented in Figures D-1 through D-5 are based entirely on the data presented in this table.

Figure D-1: Hillcrest Attrition, 1993-2006

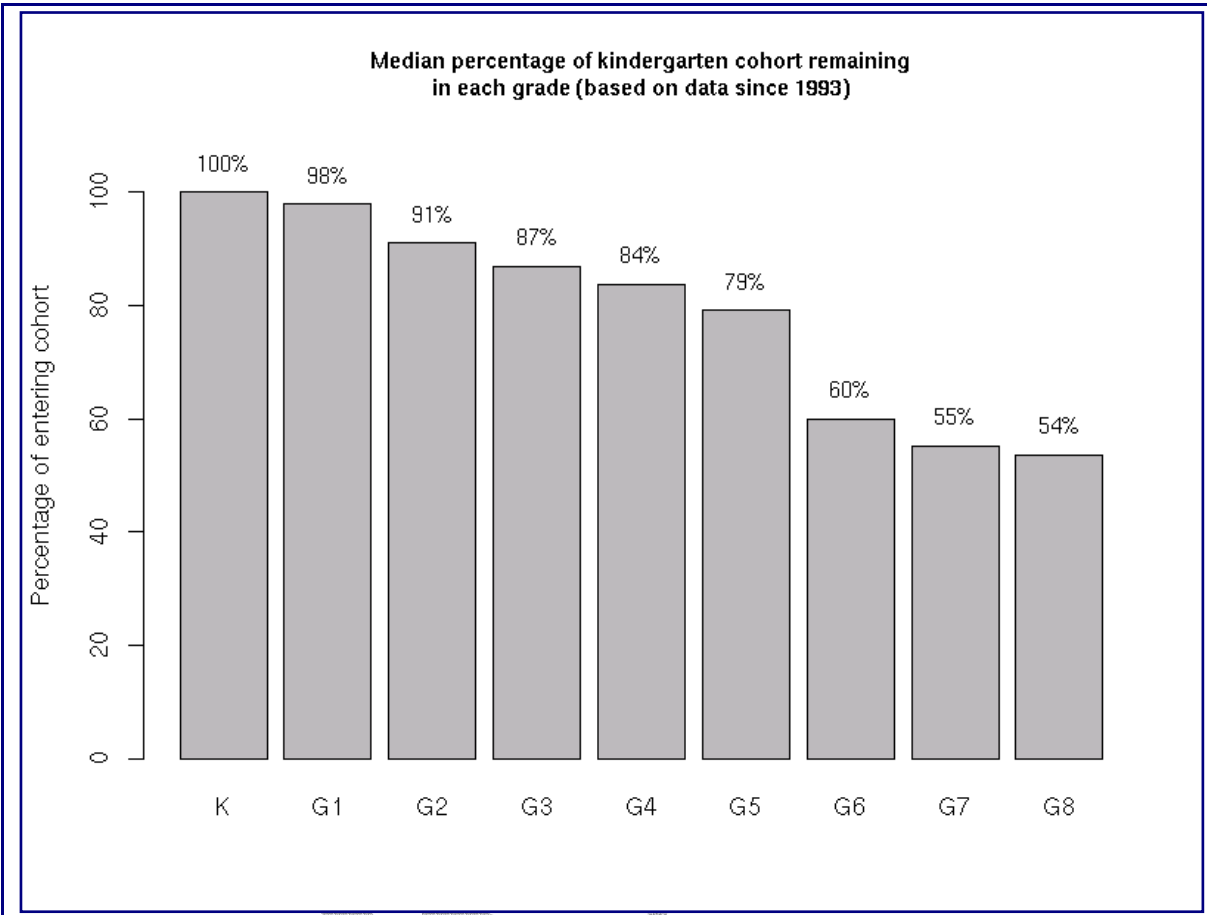


Figure D-1 presents a high-level view of the attrition rate on which Hillcrest has historically relied. Average attrition has been approximately five percent of students for each grade except fifth, where typically 15 to 20 percent of students have left Hillcrest to attend middle school elsewhere. Looking at the value reported for grade 8 one can see that typically about 54 percent of students entering Hillcrest remain for the full 8 years.

Figure D-2: Enrollment by year of entry

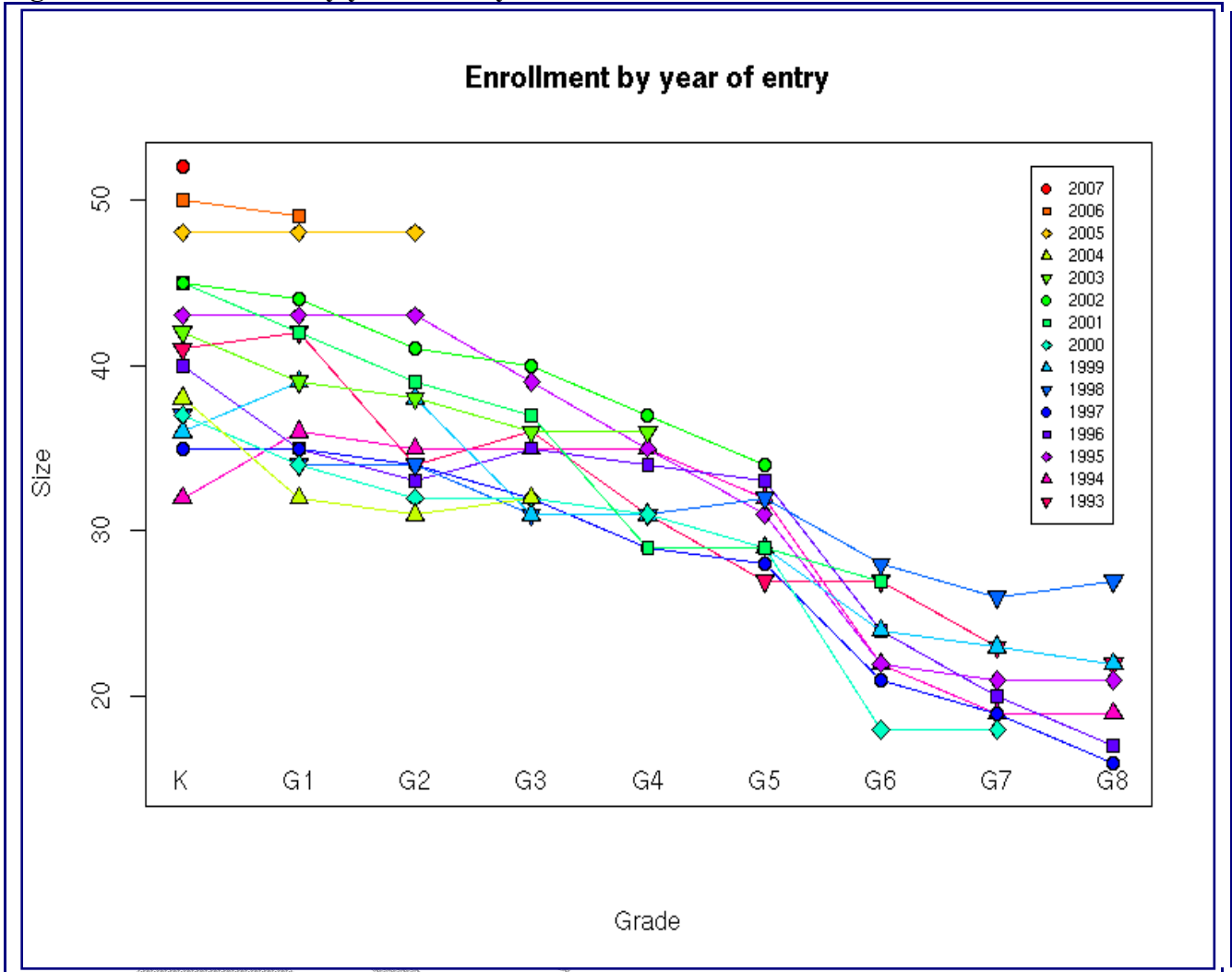


Figure D-2 presents a detailed view of the grade size for each grade band as it progresses through the school. The most striking feature is the typical drop from fifth grade to the middle school, though there have been exceptions to this general rule: One can see that the class that entered Hillcrest in 1993 actually increased slightly in size going from fifth grade to the middle school, and the class that entered K in 2001 (and that entered the middle school in 2007) had unusually high retention.

Figure D-3: Attrition by calendar year

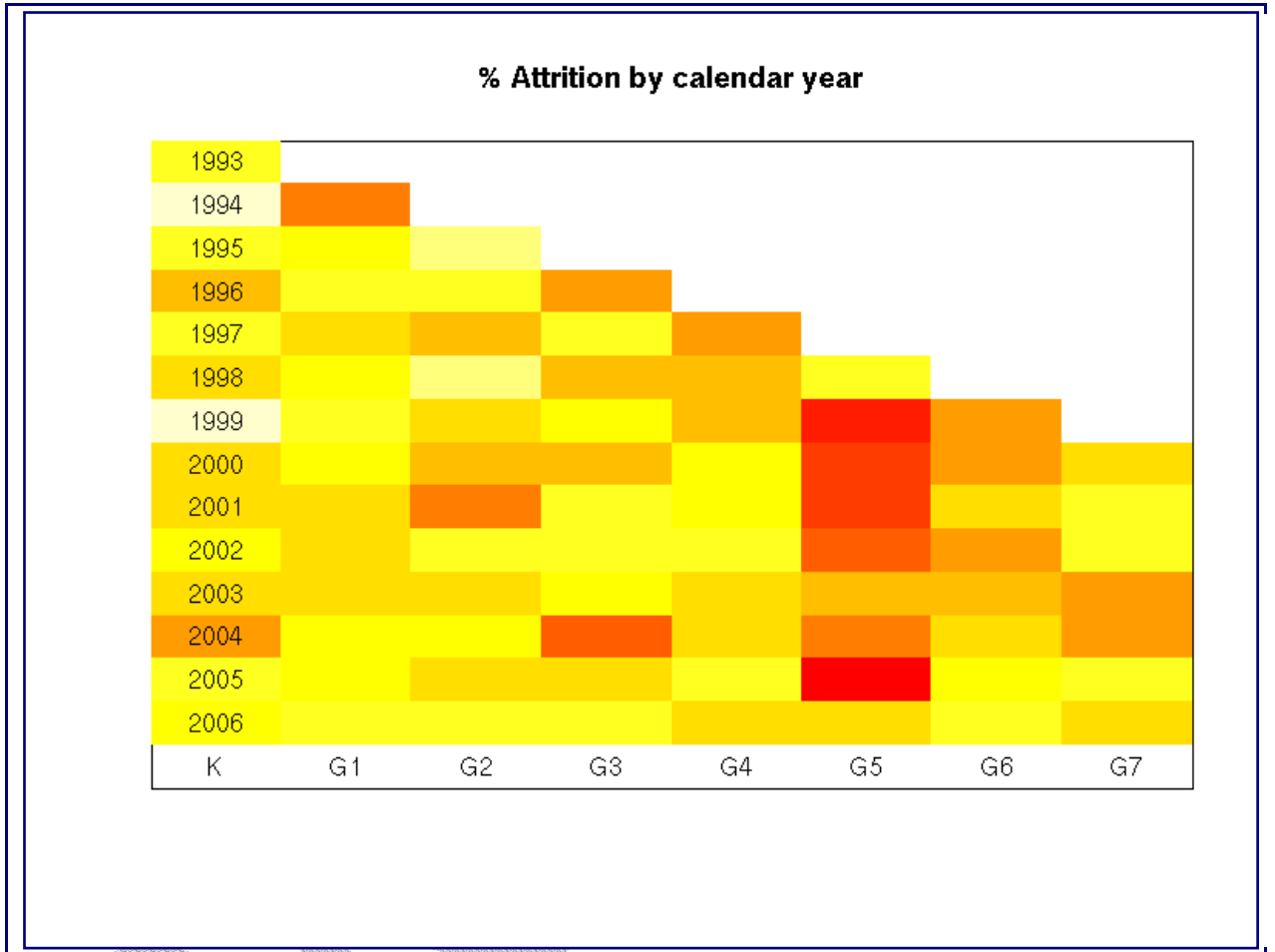


Figure D-3: Attrition summarized by grade and calendar year. Grades which underwent larger attrition are presented in deeper shades of red. As in Figures D-1 and D-2 the most striking feature is the typical big drop going from fifth grade, though as indicated in the caption for Figure D-2 there are two notable exceptions: the class which entered fifth grade in 2006 (*i.e.*, the class which entered the middle school at the time of this report) and the class which entered the middle school in 1999. The other feature brought out in this view of the data is the suggestion of a general trend in recent years towards lower levels of attrition – the tendency is for the cells in the bottom rows of the plot to be lighter than those at the top.

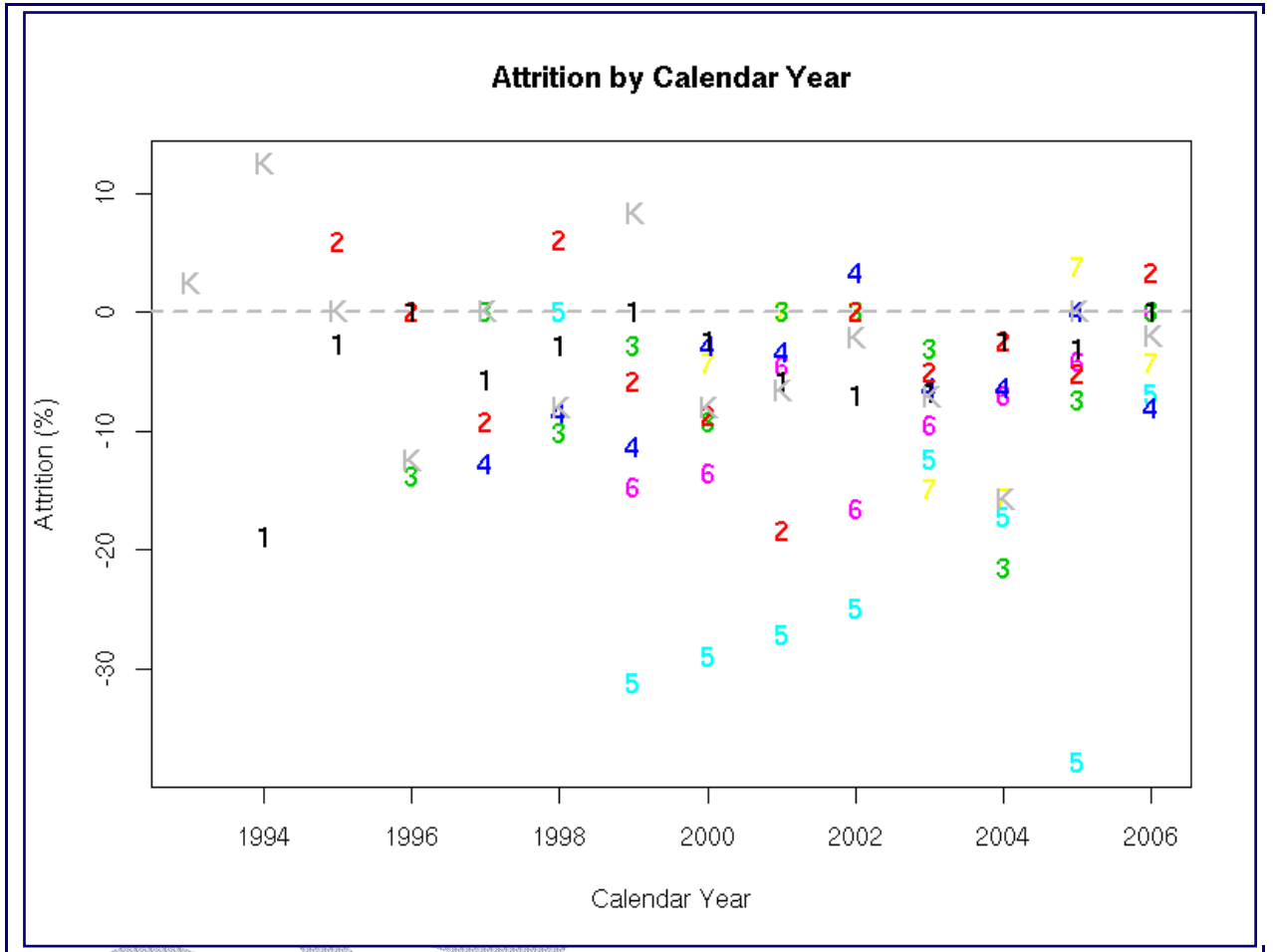


Figure D-4: An alternate view of the same data presented in Figure D-3: attrition as a function of calendar year and grade. The attrition is plotted against calendar year, with the color and symbol used to indicate the per-grade attrition within that year. The very few cases in which the grade size increased from one year to the next are easily identified as the points plotted above the horizontal line at 0%, and these increases in class size will have been enabled by exceptions to the typical pattern of not accepting applicants to any grade level other than kindergarten. As with the view in Figure D-3, there is a suggestive trend where it appears in recent years that fewer students are choosing to leave Hillcrest than has been the case in the past.

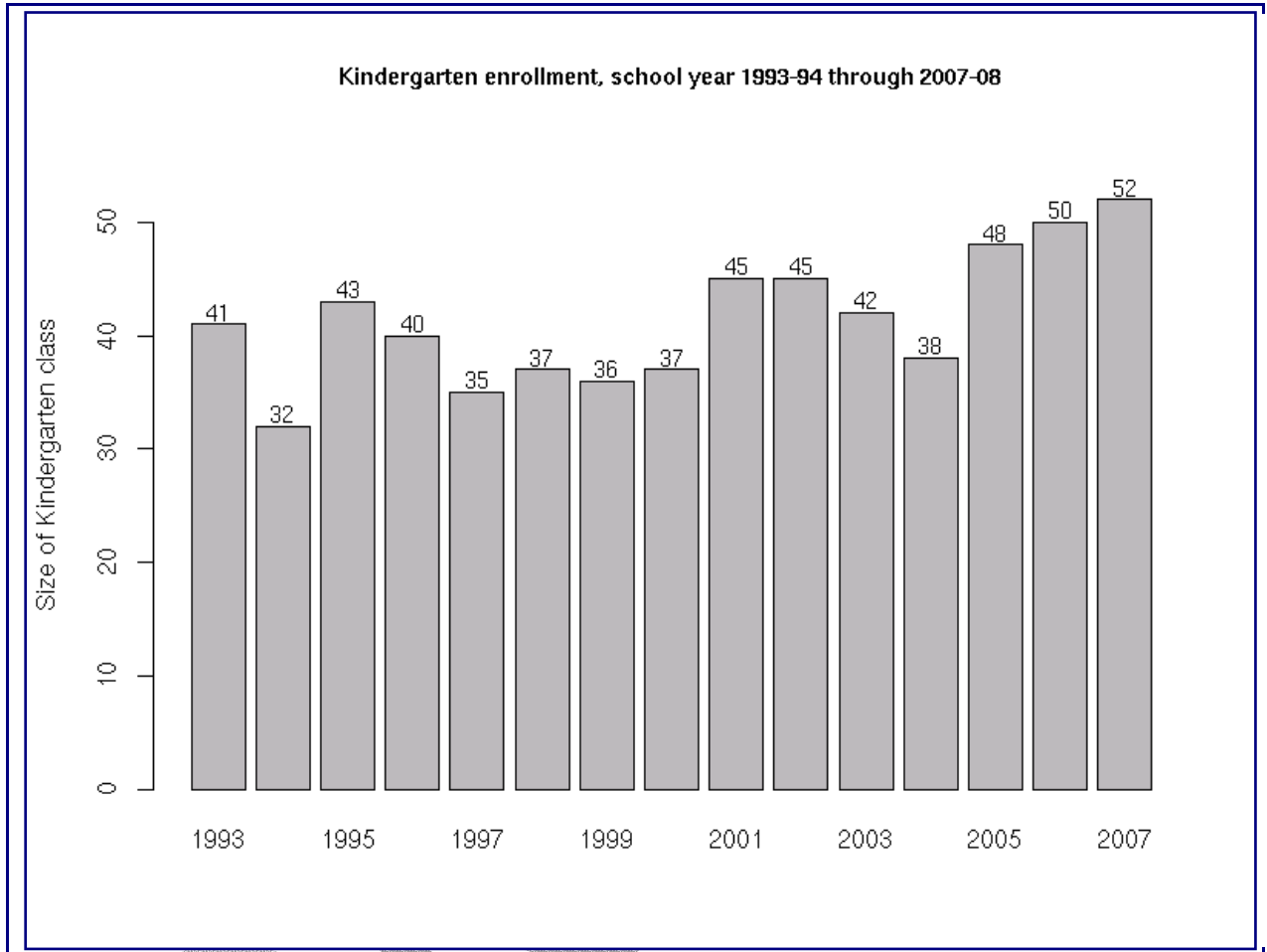


Figure D-5: Historical number of children enrolled in kindergarten at Hillcrest. In at least some and possibly many cases the number of applicants exceeded the eventual number enrolled, however data on the number of applicants are not generally available. For the kindergarten class entering in 2006 the number of applicants was over 64.

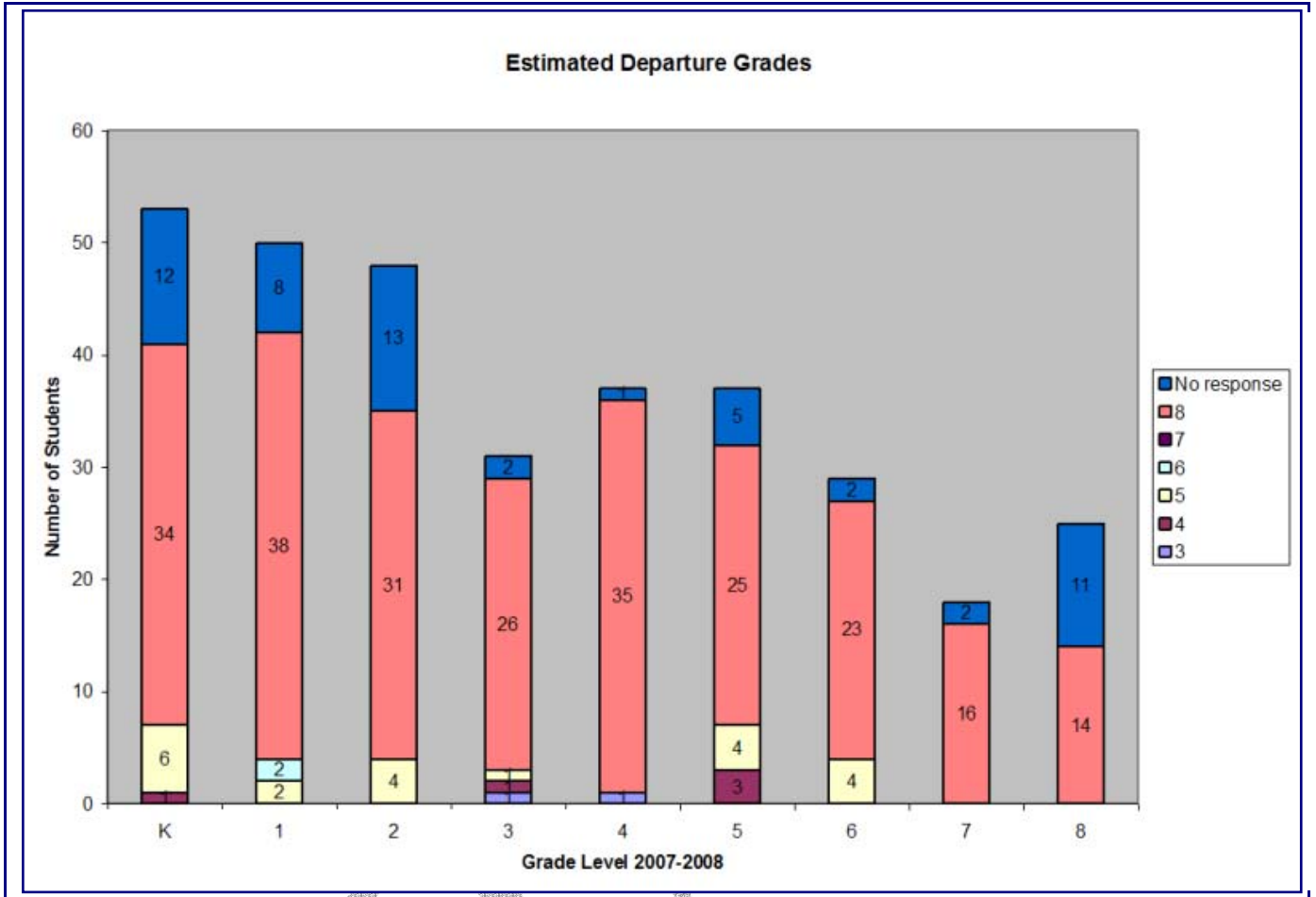


Figure D-6. Survey of Existing Hillcrest Families for 2007-2008 School Year Regarding Enrollment Intentions. How to Read This Chart: The X axis shows the grade level of students in 2007-2008. The color coded bars indicate the highest grade at which a responder expects their child is most likely to complete at Hillcrest. For example, in the second grade class, 31 of the 35 responders indicated their child is most likely to stay at Hillcrest through eighth grade, while 4 indicated their student is most likely to complete fifth grade at Hillcrest and attend sixth grade at another school. Compare these data with the data in Figure D-1: historically 54% of the entering cohort has remained at Hillcrest to complete the middle school, whereas 34 of 41 or 83% responders who specified a preference from the current kindergarten class say they intend to remain through to the eighth grade. This same massive excess over what has been relied upon historically is seen at all grade levels through sixth.